New Mexico Agricultural Statistics Service

Weekly Ag Update

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INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

Crop Weather Livestock Slaughter ERS

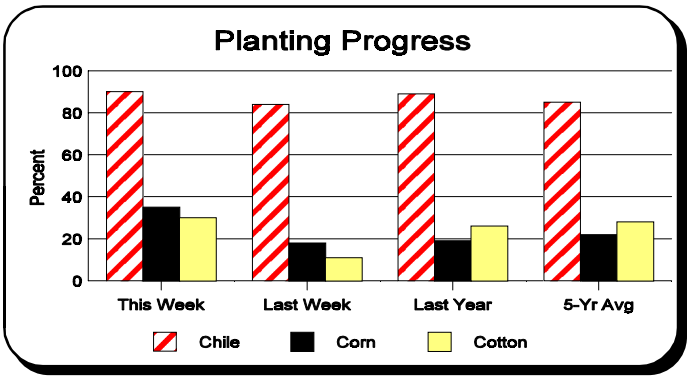
Available on internet at: www.nass.usda.gov/nm OR by e-mail: (call 1-800-530-8810 for information)

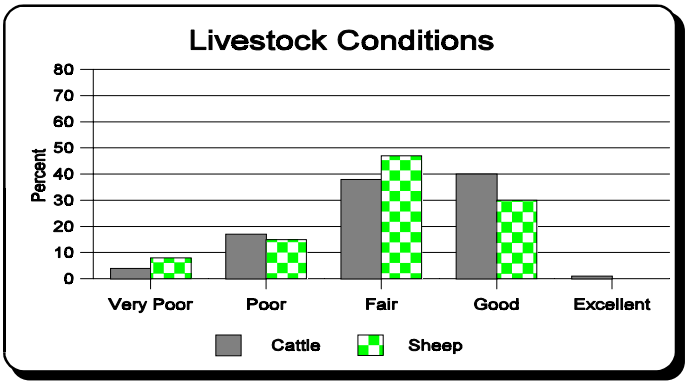
CROP SUMMARY FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 23, 2000

NEW MEXICO: Very windy conditions mid-week continued to dry out already parched dryland fields, pastures and ranges. Both irrigated and dryland crops had light to severe wind damage reported. There were 6.4 days suitable for field work. Main farm activities during the week centered around spring planting. Lettuce and alfalfa harvest had begun in the southern part of the state. Onions and chile remained in mostly good to excellent condition. Irrigated wheat was in fair to good condition, while the dryland crop was reported in poor to fair condition. Supplemental feeding of cattle continued. Cattle conditions were relatively unchanged at mostly fair to good. Sheep conditions increased slightly with most now being reported in the fair to good range. Pasture and range feed conditions were 12% very poor, 29% poor, 42% fair, 16% good and 1% excellent.

CROP PROGRESS PERCENTAGES WITH COMPARISONS

CROP PROGRESS		This Week	Last Week	Last Year	5-Year Average
PLANTED	Chile	90	84	89	85
	Corn	35	18	19	22
	Cotton	30	11	26	28
HEADED	Wheat (Total)	13	--	11	5
HARVESTED	Lettuce	15	–	–	--



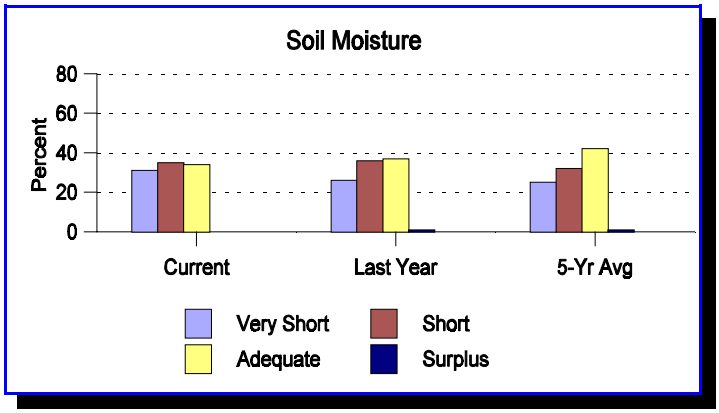


CROP AND LIVESTOCK CONDITION PERCENTAGES

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Alfalfa	4	10	31	42	13
Chile	--	2	28	55	15
Corn	--	--	32	50	18
Cotton	–	–	20	80	--
Dry Wheat	8	23	65	4	--
Irrigated Wheat	2	6	18	73	1
Lettuce	--	--	20	20	60
Onions	--	1	21	47	31
Cattle	4	17	38	40	1
Sheep	8	15	47	30	--

SOIL MOISTURE PERCENTAGES

	Very Short	Short	Adequate	Surplus
Northwest	16	37	47	---
Northeast	13	48	38	1
Southwest	63	23	14	---
Southeast	58	17	25	---
State	31	35	34	---
State-Last Year	26	36	37	1
State-5-Yr Avg.	25	32	42	1



WEATHER SUMMARY

New Mexico experienced a dry, warm week with a statewide temperature between 3 and 4 degrees above normal. A rather intense storm passed over the state during the latter part of the week, but mainly produced strong winds that fanned the flames of numerous wildfires. The only precipitation with the storm was in the northeast, and the few locations that received rain collected less than one fifth of an inch. Des Moines/Capulin reported the greatest total (0.17").

NEW MEXICO WEATHER CONDITIONS APRIL 17-23, 2000

	Temperature			Precipitation				
Station	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	04/17 04/23	04/01 04/23	Normal Apr	01/01 04/23	Normal Jan-Apr
Carlsbad	73.0	99	47	0.00	0.00	0.49	0.31	1.49
Hobbs	69.3	94	33	0.00	0.00	0.73	1.65	2.23
Roswell	67.7	93	43	0.00	0.15	0.46	0.83	1.60
Clayton	59.1	85	38	T	0.03	0.94	1.97	2.04
Clovis	63.9	90	40	0.00	0.18	0.81	2.08	2.30
Roy	52.9	73	36	0.00	0.75	0.82	2.40	2.14
Tucumcari	64.9	93	35	T	0.40	0.87	2.16	2.00
Chama	45.9	69	24	0.03	0.35	1.27	6.28	6.61
Johnson Ranch	48.9	75	22	0.00	0.14	0.49	3.97	2.47
Capulin	51.3	78	24	0.17	0.61	1.01	3.40	2.86
Las Vegas	55.3	77	30	0.00	0.76	0.89	1.72	2.16
Los Alamos	52.0	73	28	0.00	0.53	1.00	2.16	3.88
Raton	51.4	78	27	0.01	0.44	1.06	3.32	2.90
Santa Fe	58.4	78	29	0.00	0.49	0.81	1.31	2.87
Red River	44.1	64	20	0.11	1.92	1.68	7.58	5.75
Farmington	55.1	79	30	0.00	0.07	0.51	2.99	2.48
Gallup	49.9	76	20	0.00	0.00	0.64	2.33	3.23
Grants	50.9	76	24	0.00	0.10	0.45	2.24	1.95
Silver City	57.1	79	38	0.00	0.00	0.53	0.53	3.90
Quemado	49.4	76	19	0.00	0.13	0.37	2.66	2.06
Albuquerque	60.6	83	40	0.00	0.00	0.52	1.87	1.96
Carrizozo	60.6	82	35	0.00	0.18	0.36	1.46	2.10
Gran Quivera	59.6	78	35	0.00	0.49	0.64	1.90	2.88
Moriarty	54.9	81	32	0.00	0.40	0.66	1.80	2.10
Ruidoso	56.8	78	26	0.00	0.65	0.63	1.10	4.24
Socorro	60.9	87	34	0.00	0.02	0.36	2.19	1.41
Alamogordo	66.5	88	45	0.00	0.01	0.26	0.63	1.93
Animas	66.4	90	42	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.46	1.86
Deming	64.4	90	37	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.79	1.54
T or C	65.9	89	43	0.00	0.01	0.22	1.51	1.40
Las Cruces	67.4	91	37	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.21	1.26

(T) Trace (-) No Report (*) Correction

All reports based on preliminary data. Precipitation data corrected monthly from official observation forms.

LIVESTOCK SLAUGHTER

NEW MEXICO: The state's cattle slaughter for March totaled only 1,300 head, down sharply from a year ago. Live weight fell to 1.31 million pounds despite an increase in the average slaughter weight to 993 pounds per head. Sheep slaughter was also down, 3,000 head compared to 3,600 last March. Total live weight slipped to 348,000 pounds as a result of the reduced slaughter number and a lower average slaughter weight.

Commercial Livestock Slaughter, New Mexico and U.S., March 1999-2000

	New Mexico						United States					
	Number Slaughtered		Total Live weight		Average Live weight		Number Slaughtered		Total Live weight		Average Live weight	
	'99	'00	'99	'00	'99	'00	'99	'00	'99	'00	'99	'00
	1,000 Head		1,000 Pounds		Pounds		1,000 Head		1,000 Pounds		Pounds	
Cattle	2.4	1.3	2,163	1,313	887	993	3,050.4	3,131.0	3,709,209	3,802,845	1,216	1,215
Calves[2/]	---	---	---	---	---	---	116.8	102.8	33,482	32,938	287	320
Hogs	0.2	0.2	39	42	213	212	9,117.7	8,810.5	2,362,701	2,308,081	259	262
Sheep/lambs	3.6	3.0	426	348	119	117	423.9	344.2	57,919	48,120	137	140

[1/] Includes slaughter under Federal inspection and other commercial slaughter, excludes farm slaughter. [2/] State data included in U.S. total. Data not printed to avoid disclosing individual operations.

U.S. Organic Agriculture Gaining Ground

USDA, ERS, April 2000

U.S.-certified organic cropland more than doubled during the 1990's, and two organic livestock sectors--eggs and dairy--grew even faster, according to a new study by USDA's Economic Research Service. U.S. producers are turning to organic farming systems as a way potentially to lower input costs, decrease reliance on nonrenewable resources, capture high-value markets and premium prices, and boost farm income. Markets for organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs have been developing for decades in the U.S., and organic grain and livestock markets are beginning to emerge. Under USDA's new proposal for regulating organic production and handling in the U.S., announced March 7, 2000, purchasers of organic foods would be able to rely on uniform and consistent national standards for defining the term "organic."

USDA Proposed Rules for Organic Farmers and Handlers

Purchasers of organic foods would be able to rely on uniform and consistent national standards for defining the term "organic," under USDA's new proposal for regulating organic production and handling in the U.S. The proposal, announced March 7, 2000, addresses the methods, practices, and substances used in producing and handling organic crops, livestock, and processed foods. It includes requirements for labeling, certification, and the accreditation of certifiers.

The new proposal reflects recommendations made in over 275,000 responses to USDA's initial proposal in December 1997. Currently, organic food is certified by various state and private organizations that apply their own standards in defining the term "organic." The proposed regulations are similar to most of the standards organic producers and handlers currently use, and are intended to be flexible enough to accommodate the wide range of operations and products grown and raised throughout the U.S. The new rules require operations that grow or process organic foods to be certified by USDA-accredited certifying agents. USDA-certified operations may label their products as organic.

Farms and handling operations that sell less than $5,000 per year of organic agricultural products are exempt from certification. These producers and handlers must still abide by national standards for organic products and must comply with labeling requirements. Retail food establishments that sell organically produced agricultural products but do not process them are also exempt from certification.

The proposed regulations would prohibit use of genetic engineering (genetic modification), irradiation, and sewer sludge in the production of organic foods. The production requirements apply to the way the product is created, not to measurable properties of the product itself. Although specific practices and materials used by individual organic operations may vary, the proposed standards require every aspect of organic production and handling to comply with provisions of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, which the new rules would implement. The national standards would include a National List of approved and prohibited substances for use in organic production and handling (approved synthetic, and prohibited nonsynthetic, substances). Producers must operate under an organic system plan approved by an accredited certifying agent.

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Organic Agriculture (continued)

Crop Standards

For all crop products intended for sale as organic, the proposed organic crop production standards detail the following:

* land would have no prohibited substances applied to it for at least 3 years before the harvest of an organic crop;
* crop rotation would be implemented;
* the use of genetic engineering (included in excluded methods), irradiation, and sewage sludge is prohibited;
* soil fertility and crop nutrients would be managed through tillage and cultivation practices, supplemented with animal and crop waste materials and allowed synthetic materials;
* preference would be given to the use of organic seeds and other planting stock, but a farmer could use nonorganic seeds and planting stock under certain specified conditions;
* crop pests, weeds, and diseases would be controlled primarily through management practices including physical, mechanical, and biological controls. When these practices are not sufficient, a biological, botanical, or allowed synthetic substance may be used.

Livestock Standards

Livestock standards apply to animals used for meat, milk, eggs, and other animal products represented as organically produced. The proposed livestock standards provide details of the following requirements:

* animals for slaughter must be raised on an organic operation from birth, or no later than the second day of life for poultry;
* producers would be required to feed 100 percent organically produced feeds to livestock but could also provide allowed vitamin and mineral supplements;
* organically raised animals could not be given hormones or antibiotics;
* preventive management practices, including the use of vaccines, would be used to keep animals healthy;
* producers would be prohibited from withholding treatment from a sick or injured animal; however, animals treated with a prohibited medication would be removed from the organic operation;
* all organically raised animals would have to have access to the outdoors, including access to pasture for ruminants, and animals could be temporarily confined only for reasons of health, safety, or to protect soil or water quality.

The public will be able to submit comments on this revised proposed rule in both written and electronic form for 90 days after its publication in the Federal Register March 13, 2000. USDA will then review and categorize the comments, make any necessary revisions to the proposed rule, and submit a final rule for publication in the Federal Register. Discussion of public comments will be included in the final rule.

Implementation of the regulations, starting with the first round of certifier accreditation, can begin when the final rule is published. During the first 18 months of implementation, all clients of certifiers are considered USDA-certified immediately upon USDA accreditation of their certifier. Certified operations must comply with the national standards and will be assessed by their certifier on the anniversary date of their original certification.

For further information on the proposed rules, visit USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service/National Organic Program (NOP) website at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/, or contact NOP staff by phone (202) 720-3252, or email, NOP.Webmaster@usda.gov. The official public comment period on the revised proposed rule is March 13 through June 12, 2000.